

RECTOR HALL JOINED IN GAY PARTIES WITH CHOIR SINGER AT MILLS HOME

Charlotte Recalls Happy Times in Her Drab Home

The Rev. Edward Hall had achieved success. He had all the material comforts any man could desire. He was the rector of a fine church. He was married to a woman of great wealth and social position. He lived in a big, fine house. Yet all these things meant nothing to him. He sought happiness elsewhere—in the poor little home of the sexton of his church. For there was merriment (when he was present), singing, the happy prattle of children, and—the woman he loved.

He was rich. She was poor. Their bond was love. But their mortal love yielded to death when they were murdered four years ago on a deserted farm near New Brunswick, N. J. Now, Charlotte Mills, daughter of the slain woman, after years of silent suffering, at last tells the true story of her mother's romance and sketches the significant background of the famous Hall-Mills murder.

My Own Story of My Mother's



Love and Murder

WE HAD FUN

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Sometimes I think that if I didn't have lots of happy times to look back on I'd go crazy with all this thinking, and testifying and hearing mother discussed and Mr. Hall and their love—discussed and wrangled over by lawyers, and commented upon by strangers who draw conclusions from what they read in news-stories, without knowing anything about us or our home life.

Father was always pretty serious, but mother was jolly and lively most of the time, and on the whole we had a good deal of fun.

There was "Mr. Rubenstein," the piano, for instance. It was a terrible piano, as big as a house, as ugly as a freight car and weighed as much as one. We had Mr. Rubenstein for years. We youngsters used to bang on it and climb on it and play tag around its legs and carve our initials on its top. It was a sight, but you could play on it somehow.

Sang Old Songs

Mother had a book of old-fashioned songs—one called "Daddy," and "Love's Old Sweet Song," Tosti's "Good-By," "Fiddle and I," "In the Gloaming." That's when Mr. Hall used to come around—in the gloaming, at the end of the day just before dark.

We'd all get together in the parlor with Mr. Rubenstein, and mother played the accompaniments sometimes, and sometimes Mr. Hall did. Mr. Hall joined in with us singing. He had a lovely voice, tenor, and used to sing in his mission at Bernardsville, where he was before he came to New Brunswick.

One of the presents Mr. Hall gave me was a big red book with all kinds of classic songs in it and

marches and college glees and popular ballads. It is called "The Family Music Book," and I wouldn't take anything on earth for it.

Mr. Hall could play the piano and organ. He taught mother a little on the church organ, and she tried to teach me. But I was always too dumb to learn much, and I hated to practice.

Always Gay Party

Well, we all used to stand around and sing and laugh and have good times. Then mother would make coffee and always manage to find apfel kuchen or cookies in the kitchen and make a "party." It wasn't much of a party, but we kids called it that and always liked Mr. Hall to come because we had the cakes and sometimes dumplings.

It wasn't very long after that that something happened to "Mr. Rubenstein"; we couldn't understand what, but he simply wouldn't play. Father took him apart and spread all the hammers and sections and keys on the floor on newspapers. Dan and I got them all mixed up, but poor father kept at it—he was smart that way, could do anything in the way of repairs—and finally he got the pieces all out and the case opened up—and I wish I could make a list of the things he found inside of "Mr. Rubenstein!"

There were yards of string and bits of wrapping paper, jacks, marbles, "steelies" (that the boys shoot marbles with), pencils, an old ink bottle, scissors, shoe-horns, a couple of table napkins and about a dozen apple cores we kids had thrown in. Everything mother had missed for weeks seemed to be in that poor piano.

When we children saw what was inside we beat it out the back way and into the lot, for we knew what mother would do to us.

Father actually got it together again, all cleaned out, and it played once more. Only a few of the keys were queer. But that terrible old piano was one of my best friends. I really loved it.

When I was strumming on it, nothing could drag me away. I'd sometimes get up from the table in the midst of a meal and bang on "Mr. Rubenstein." I can hear mother now calling from the kitchen:

"Mugs-ie—don't you want some more chops? Some more potatoes? Some gravy—"

"Nope," I'd say, and go on banging.

"Want some muffins?"

"No!"

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"Want some cherry pie?"

That would get me. Not even "Mr. Rubenstein" could hold me when one of mother's cherry pies was waiting. It catches me in the throat to think of it all now.

We kept the old piano a while after mother's death, but I found I couldn't play on it any more or try to sing her songs or see her books around; it made me too miserable.

A relative wanted a piano for the kids to practice on, and we decided to give "Mr. Rubenstein" away. I shall never forget the ridiculousness and the sadness of his departure. Father arranged with a truckman to cart "Mr. Rubenstein" off for a certain amount. When the man saw the size of him he nearly had a fit.

"That's not a piano," he said, "that's a house."

"You said it would be so-and-so much for a piano," said father, "and that's the piano."

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"But it will take twelve strong men to move that thing," the poor truckman yelled, "and I don't know how many hours' time taking it apart to get it out of here."

Father made them stick to the bargain and I think they worked and sweated hours over it. Dan and I couldn't help laughing to see poor "Mr. Rubenstein's" legs, lid, front, back and sides being pried off and the men struggling to get him out in pieces. It was sad, too. I knew I would miss him terribly, yet I couldn't stand keeping him.

The last thing the truckman said as he staggered off was, "Well, if you ever want this here warehouse moved again, don't call it no piano—and hire some other trucking company to do it!"

Poor "Mr. Rubenstein"! The people where he went almost had to move out of the house to give him room.

When that old battered piano

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went I was very lonely. Mother had always tried to teach us little

(Continued on Page 29)

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